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RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY
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RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000210

SENSITIVE

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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: RED CRESCENT SOCIETY VOLUNTEERS
SHOWCASE DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION EFFORTS

REF: Ashgabat 147

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11. (SBU) Sensitive but unclassified. Not for public Internet.

12. (SBU) SUMMARY: INL Assistant met recently with an instructor from the Red Crescent Society's Drug Demand Reduction Project, as well as local project volunteers. The instructor highlighted the project's educational activities with students and teachers and its public outreach. The teenage volunteers, in turn, were eager to share their success stories about engaging with their peers. END
SUMMARY.

ADDICTS AVOID MEETING WITH INSTRUCTORS

13. (SBU) On February 10, INL Assistant traveled to the town of Owadan, about 12 miles outside Ashgabat, to meet with Patma Kadyrova, an instructor with the INL-funded Drug Demand Reduction Project (DDRP). The project, implemented by the National Red Crescent Society (RCS), educates adults and youth about the hazards of drug addiction. Four project volunteers also joined the meeting. Patma briefed on her activities and accomplishments since the project's inception in late 2008. She targets her presentations to adolescent students in schools. A teacher by training, she particularly enjoys working with students, but has found doing outreach to local doctors and nurses equally satisfying. Working with families has been much harder, she said. Those with no experience with addiction are not interested, and the families of addicts are ashamed to discuss the problem with an outsider. On several occasions, women - the spouses or family members of addicts - have confided in her and asked that she come to the home and try to talk to their drug-addicted son or husband. The addicts have an aversive reaction to such visits. "When I come to visit them, they (the addicts) run off and try to avoid me," she said. "They are either too ashamed to talk, or start shouting, accusing me of being from the police. In such

cases, all I can do is leave copies of my brochures and ask that they call me another time."

EVERYBODY WANTS TO VOLUNTEER

¶4. (SBU) Patma said that she had 17 volunteers working for her in Ahal Province. Two are adults -- a nurse and a high school teacher -- and the other 15 are teenagers. Only six of the 17 are trained volunteers, able to conduct the peer-to-peer classes. The rest are enthusiastic teen-agers anxious to work with the Red Crescent Society and the DDRP. Patma explained it like this, "Schools no longer offer extra-curricular or after school activities, so young people have very little to do with their free time. Here, they enjoy getting together with their peers and accompanying us to different venues for presentations. They pass our brochures to the audience and help in other ways, too. It's fun, and they feel that they're doing something useful."

¶5. The four teenage volunteers (all female) who were present looked about 17 or 18. They said that many of their classmates also want to participate in the project. One of them, Govher, said "We always tell them that anyone can join us. All you need is the desire to help and, of course, be a good student."

HOW DO YOU HELP A DRUG ADDICT?

¶6. (SBU) Patma and her volunteers said that the most frequently-asked question during their presentations is "How can I help someone stop using drugs?" She said that many people have an addict in the family and are desperate to find a way to help them be cured, but there are no specialized

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treatment centers. Another common question is "What are symptoms of addiction?" She said that, during a visit to an orphanage, she asked the children to draw a picture of what they thought a drug addict looked like. "All the children draw pictures of scary, ugly men. Some drew monsters," Gowher said.

WHAT'S IN THE GIFT BOX?

¶7. (SBU) The volunteers said that teenagers love the peer-to-peer classes. One volunteer named Oguljeren said, "Our presentations take place in a friendly atmosphere and we sometimes play thematic games." One of the games that they play with their peers is called "What's in the gift box?" The object of the game is to present a box to the audience and ask them to guess what is inside. Anyone can look inside, on the condition that they not reveal the contents to the remaining "guessers." The game demonstrates time and again, she said, that there are always people with poor will power, who cannot resist divulging the secret to the others. She said that they tend to be the kinds of individuals vulnerable to peer pressure and drug addiction.

¶8. (SBU) COMMENT: Involving volunteers in DDRP activities is a cornerstone of the DDRP project, and part of its success. Many of the DDRP volunteers plan to continue with community activities in the future with the RCS or other NGOs. Others, using their experience with drug demand reduction activities, say they want to study medicine and become physicians specialized in the treatment of drug addicts. END COMMENT.

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